

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2707

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to higher education branch campuses.

Brief Description: Regarding higher education branch campuses.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Kenney, Priest, Sommers, Jarrett, McCoy, Chase and Hudgins).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/27/04, 2/3/04 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/14/04, 95-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 3/2/04, 48-0.

House Concurred.

Passed House: 3/8/04, 95-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Declares the primary mission of higher education branch campuses to be providing access to upper division and graduate level education, but recognizes alternative models and additional secondary missions respond to regional needs.
- Permits branch campuses to propose legislation authorizing practice-oriented or professional doctoral programs.
- Removes Washington State University Spokane from designation as a branch campus.
- Directs each branch campus to make a recommendation on the future evolution, model of education, and mission of the campus to the Higher Education Coordinating Board by November 15, 2004.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.
Signed by 11 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking

Minority Member; Priest, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt, Chase, Condotta, Jarrett, McCoy, Morrell and Ormsby.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

When the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) published its first master plan for higher education in 1987, it concluded that existing upper division and graduate higher education programs did not fully meet the needs of the state. Affirming these findings, the 1989 Legislature established five branch campuses in growing urban areas, to be operated by the state's two public research universities. The University of Washington (UW) campuses are located in Tacoma and Bothell; the Washington State University (WSU) campuses are located in Vancouver, the Tri-Cities, and Spokane.

In 2002 and 2003, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) was directed to examine the current and future role and mission of the branch campuses. The Institute's interim report concluded that branch campuses have been responding to their original missions to expand access to higher education and contribute to regional economic development. However, the Institute's final report pointed out that branch campuses are influenced by significant internal and external factors that may be moving them away from their original missions. The Institute also found that each branch campus is unique with a distinct local context, including academic programs, faculty expertise, student demographics, nearby industries, and neighboring higher education institutions.

The final report identified several opportunities for future legislative direction regarding branch campuses. Topics included:

1. *The designation of each branch campus as a research institution.* The Institute found that, although the level of research at each branch varies widely, the research activity of most branch campuses falls somewhere between the state's research and comprehensive institutions. Nevertheless the state funds each branch campus as a research university.
2. *Improvement of collaboration among branch campuses and community and technical colleges.* The Institute found that collaboration occurs among branch campuses and community and technical colleges, but is inconsistent. Research institutions and community colleges have markedly distinct academic programs, cultures, and students. Although current statute references a two-plus-two model of education, it does not specifically require the institutions to work together.
3. *Role of each branch campus in offering doctoral programs.* Current statute refers to graduate education being offered at branch campuses, but does not specify the level of graduate education. The HECB policy originally prohibited branch campuses from offering doctoral degrees because of their costs, but this policy has been relaxed over time. The WSU Spokane campus received HECB approval for a Doctorate in Pharmacy in 1992. Other proposals have been discussed, but some legislators question adding this activity to the branches' portfolio.

4. *Whether any branch campus needs to become a four-year institution.* The prospect of becoming a four-year institution is a key topic for branch campuses, with the possible exception of WSU Spokane. Faculty reward systems, academic culture, and community interests provide pressure to create a more traditional campus. A national consultant on the Institute study indicated that branch campuses in other states have tended to respond to these pressures by becoming four-year institutions.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Legislature finds that branch campuses are responding to their original mission, but that the policy landscape in higher education has changed. Each branch campus has evolved into a unique institution, and it is appropriate to assess this evolution to ensure each campus is aligned with state goals and regional needs. The Legislature intends to recognize the unique nature of branch campuses, reaffirm the mission of each, and set the course for their continued future development. The Legislature also intends to identify each campus, not as a branch campus, but by its name.

The primary mission of branch campuses is stated: to expand access to baccalaureate and master's level graduate education in under-served urban areas in collaboration with community and technical colleges. However, the Legislature recognizes there are alternative models to achieve the primary mission and some campuses may have additional secondary missions in response to regional needs. Some may be best suited to transition to a four-year comprehensive university; others should focus on continuous improvement of the two-plus-two model. At some campuses, an innovative combination of instruction and research targeted to support regional economic development may be appropriate.

Branch campuses are directed to collaborate with community and technical colleges to develop articulation agreements, dual admissions policies, and other partnerships. Other possible collaboration includes joint development of curricula and degree programs, collocation of instruction, and faculty-sharing. Representatives of local independent institutions may be invited to participate in conversations about meeting baccalaureate and graduate education needs in under served areas. The HECB must adopt performance measures to ensure a collaborative partnership between community and technical colleges and branch campuses.

Legislative intent is stated that each branch campus be funded commensurate with its unique mission, the degree programs offered, and the combination of instruction and research, but at a level less than a research university.

In consultation with the HECB, branch campuses may propose legislation authorizing practice-oriented or professional doctoral programs if: a) unique research facilities and equipment are located near the campus; or b) the campus can clearly demonstrate student and employer demand in the region, linked to economic development.

The WSU Spokane is no longer considered a branch campus. The WSU and Eastern Washington University must collaborate with one another and with local community colleges to provide educational pathways and programs to citizens in the Spokane area. Each remaining branch campus must make a recommendation to the HECB by November 15, 2004 on the future evolution of the campus. Recommendations must address the model of education and mission that best suit the campus; data that illustrates how baccalaureate and degree production will be increased; areas for possible improvements in partnerships with community and technical colleges; and an estimate of implementation costs. The HECB will review the recommendations in the context of statewide goals and present options to the Legislature by January 15, 2005.

Three sections of law pertaining to the original creation of branch campuses in 1989 are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support of original bill) The Legislature should be applauded for reexamining the branch campuses and reaffirming their role in collaboration with community colleges. Collocation of two-plus-two programs is a model of success. This bill affirms the branch campus concept and focuses the mission of the campuses.

(Concerns on original bill) The evolution into five distinct campuses is good; they have each responded to local needs and local issues. How to pay for them is also distinct to each campus because the mix of programs varies widely. Rather than treat branch campuses with a broad brush, each campus should be analyzed separately and encouraged to adapt to respond to its community. There needs to be a distinction between building capacity for students and building new institutions. The Legislature faces difficult decisions, but should beware of setting off a feeding frenzy of demand to create new four-year campuses. Demand, education models, costs, and options should all be studied carefully before proceeding.

Testimony Against: (Opposed to original bill) The notion of branch campuses must be reconsidered. Is the current two-plus-two model consistent with today's priorities? It is incorrect to assume that the high costs of branch campuses are due to their connection to research universities. The campuses have yet to reach economies of scale. It is also incorrect to assume that adding doctoral programs is, by definition, a costly endeavor. Sometimes there is great expense to communities in the campuses' inability to offer needed programs in education or nursing. Certain regions of the state absolutely need a research presence for economic development. Think of funding not "research," but "leadership" with the resources that go toward supporting the branch campuses.

Persons Testifying: (In support of original bill) Victoria Richart, Cascadia Community College.

(Concerns on original bill) Lee Huntsman, University of Washington; Vicki Carwein, University of Washington Tacoma; Earl Hale, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Bruce Botka, Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(Opposed to original bill) Representative Edwards; Larry Ganders, Washington State University; Hal Dengerink, Washington State University Vancouver; and Steven Gilbert, University of Washington Advisory Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.